



THE CASKET

FLOWERS OF
LITERATURE WIT AND SENTIMENT.

—“But man is rais'd
High in the scale of beings, and inform'd
With intellectual faculties, that show
The beauty of the mind—by which he claims
Relation to his maker, and partakes
Of rectitude divine.”

No. 5.]

PHILADELPHIA.—MAY.

[1830.

THE LION AND THE HORSE.

The engraving exhibits a terrible attack of the king of beasts upon the majestic but defenceless horse. It is copied from Stubbs, the celebrated English painter, and displays all that characteristic feeling which is better conceived than expressed.

The delineation of the passions, here aptly protruded to view in the bold muscular conformation of the horse, writhing in the agonies of pain and horror, and eliciting our sympathies for his cruel destiny, forms altogether a subject worthy the pencil of such a genius as Stubbs, who stands unrivalled in quadruped anatomy and the expression of animal passions.

The subjects of this effort of the pencil, as individuals, are well known in history; but their combination in rencounter, with all the conflict of fierceness and malignity on the one hand, and of pain and terror on the other, affords one of the most sublime spectacles which can be conceived.

In those countries infested by lions, and where the horse also runs at liberty, instances of the kind have been known. The defenceless situation of the horse, whose only security is his speed, renders him obnoxious to rapacious animals, and in particular to the strength and fierceness of the lion. While feeding in large droves, guarded by their leaders and sentinels, the lions avoid attacking them; but snatching his opportunity, he contrives to separate one of his victims from the herd, who, thus palsied by fear and unable to escape, becomes an easy prey to a daring and powerful enemy.

In Africa the lion attains to a large size, and is particularly ferocious. He measures eight feet in length, exclusive of his tail, which is about three or four feet long. His colour is a pale tawny, with a full flowing mane. His strength is such that, with a single stroke of his paw, he has broken the back of a horse, and has been known not unfrequently to carry off a young buffalo between his teeth. He rarely engages in full day light in the pursuit of prey, but

on the approach of night quits his habitation, and, with a roar which can be resembled only by a peal of thunder, overwhelms the inhabitants of the wilderness with general consternation.

The lion, in the exertion of his full energies, must present one of the most impressive images that can be conceived. The general majesty of his countenance, surrounded by his full mane intensely erected, and lighted up by the glaring indignation of his eye, connected with the thunder of his voice, and all the appearance of destruction in his mouth and paws, has, in every age, caused him to be considered as furnishing admirable materials for sublime and terrific imagery.

Though the lion frequently attacks his prey in open chase, he generally adopts the system of ambuscade; and will lurk in some thicket, frequently near the water, awaiting the approach of some animal, which its evil destiny may impel near him, on which he springs with a sudden bound, rarely failing of success, and sometimes reaching to the distance of twenty feet.

Travellers in Africa mention the instinctive dread of horses for the lion, even when they do not perceive him by the eye; and while these formidable enemies continue in their neighbourhood, they are reluctant to move, as if conscious of their danger, and require the encouraging voice of their drivers to impel them forward.—Bruce relates this fact in his journal of travels through Abyssinia:

A herd of wild horses, consisting perhaps of two or three hundred, is generally well guarded against any sudden surprise. Their sentinels on the outposts no sooner perceive an enemy than they communicate the danger, by a signal well known to the rest, at which they fly off with the speed of the wind; but when a lion is the intruder, the panic is universal, and the poor sentinel often pays for his temerity as he brings up the rear. It is these, and the stragglers from the party, whom the lion marks for his prey, and which, by a roar of reverberating and indefinite import, strikes terror and dismay; while, with

FIRST COINAGE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Every thing relating to the history of a truly great man must be of importance to posterity, and especially to the succeeding generations of his own countrymen. There is a circumstance in the history of General George Washington, known hitherto to a few individuals only, but which the kindness of a friend enables us now to lay before the public. Shortly after Washington was placed in the Presidential Chair, the impressions of several new coins were transmitted to him, and submitted to his examination. The fac similes of these coins we have caused to be engraved, and they will be found below, accompanied by an extract from a letter from Mr. Frailey, which serves further to illustrate the matter. By this letter it will be seen that Washington immediately ordered the dies to be destroyed, and the present impression on our coins to be substituted—thus declining the honour of having his image treated with that distinction which is usually allotted to monarchs and chief potentates. This act of magnanimity is truly characteristic of Washington, and deserves to be recorded as an instance of that disinterested patriotism, which, to "the father of his country," should not be less glorious than his military achievements.—*Editor Casket.*



Extract of a letter to the Editor of the Casket, from a friend in Baltimore.

In one of your late Nos. I saw a fac simile of the Penn Medal, and believing that in point of value as a relic, and of importance as noting a political epoch in the history of our country, the first coinage of the United States Mint is not inferior to the Medal, I enclose you several impressions of a cent and half dollar, struck under the administration of General Washington; the former in 1791, and the latter in 1792.

History is ominously silent on the subject of this coinage, and out of this city there are not perhaps a hundred persons who possess any knowledge of the fact; but tradition, handed down by a respectable and well-informed citizen, now deceased, (who owned the silver coin, and held it in great estimation,) informs us that very few in number were struck; that specimens were transmitted to President Washington, for his inspection and approbation, and that he promptly directed the dies to be destroyed.

It would be unnecessary now to state the precise reasons for this noble act of republican virtue and simplicity, if we were in possession of them. It was the act of the most pure and disinterested statesman and patriot of ancient or modern times, who preferred the effigies of the American eagle and of liberty as the emblems of our coinage, to that of the man, who might, perhaps, from adventitious circumstances, be placed at the head of the nation.

The execution of these dies, when compared with those of the present day, affords a very striking proof of the rise and advance of the fine arts in our country; and I have been induced to believe a fac simile of these coins are worthy a place in your valuable periodical; and that they would be highly acceptable to your patrons, if the expense of having them cut would not be onerous. There is a great resemblance between the effigy on the coins and the statue on our Washington Monument, in the whole contour of the face.